



## Shenandoah University Quality Enhancement Plan

### **Encounter, Engage, Express: *Shenandoah Conversations***

#### **Executive Summary**

Shenandoah University is a private, nationally recognized university that blends liberal arts with career preparation. Our Quality Enhancement Plan, “Encounter, Engage, Express: *Shenandoah Conversations*,” represents the culmination of detailed planning and development that incorporated administration, faculty, staff and students from across the university, a close analysis of institution-wide assessment, and a full-scale pilot. Our QEP focuses on improving student communication in the context of multiple perspectives and correlates directly with the University’s mission to “educate and inspire individuals to be critical reflective thinkers; lifelong learners; and ethical, compassionate citizens who are committed to making responsible contributions within a community, a nation and the world.”

*Shenandoah Conversations* complements and supports other university initiatives designed to develop a sense of community for all Shenandoah students, while creating a campus culture of dialogue. This QEP equips faculty and students with the skills to confront disruption and difference with curiosity, mutual understanding and respect by applying innovative, student-centered teaching and creative delivery models that immerse students in multiple perspectives. *Shenandoah Conversations* is divided into three phases: Encounter, Engage, and Express. In the Encounter phase, students are presented with a social conflict, complex issue or disruptive event. In the Engage phase, students participate in civil dialogue around the proposed issue identified in the Encounter phase. Finally, in the Express phase, students use written communication in a post dialogue assignment to express their own understanding of the disruptive issue in the context of multiple perspectives.

*Shenandoah Conversations* has two learning objectives that guide instruction and inform assessment practices: 1) Students will be able to effectively communicate their own point of view related to a social issue and/or a presented encounter, 2) Students will be able to effectively communicate a perspective different from their own related to a social issue and/or a presented encounter.

*Shenandoah Conversations* is integrated into every ethical reasoning class in our general education program; undergraduate students are required to take at least one ethical reasoning class before they graduate. In addition, the tools and programs developed for *Shenandoah Conversations* are available to all faculty and staff.

Shenandoah University has embraced a culture where broadening students’ abilities to navigate across differences is expected. These experiences aim to develop graduates better equipped to create, perform, or interact in whatever roles they find themselves when they leave our institution.

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